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ABSTRACT

The Student Driven Collaborative Transitioning model is a comprehensive program that addresses the needs of 2,436 students with disabilities from elementary through high school in the Kenosha United School District No. 1 in Wisconsin. The majority of the students have specific learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, or mental retardation. The program includes vocational assessment, behavior management, modified general education curriculum, community networks, and medical services. Student needs are addressed cooperatively by teachers, parents, and community service providers in several ways, including yearly Individualized Education Plans, transition activities, and vocational assessment. All students are exposed to a career education curriculum that includes career awareness, exploration, preparation, and specialization. In high school, students choose courses to meet their interests and educational needs, take vocational and employability courses, and participate in cooperative work experiences. Networks are set up to connect students to the community when they graduate and to follow up afterwards. This community collaboration is an exemplary school-to-work component. The success of the model rests on these factors: its clearly defined mission; high quality leadership and staff; foundation on published research; focus on individual student needs; student, parent, and community involvement; academic and vocational education, vocational assessment, supported employment, on-the-job training, and career training opportunities; and the collaborative relationships between school, work, local colleges, community service agencies, and local businesses. (KC)

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ED 412 353

Student Driven Collaborative Transitioning

Kenosha Unified School District No. 1
3600 52nd Street
Kenosha, Wisconsin 53144
(414) 653-6163

Mission/Goals

To successfully educate all students with disabilities to reach their fullest intellectual, academic, social, emotional, and physical potential. The goals of the project are to (*a*) evaluate, expand, and improve existing services that help students with disabilities prepare for adulthood; (*b*) develop an inter-organizational community action plan; and (*c*) create an interagency collaboration of local partnerships among service providers to provide quality services to students and their families.

Organization/Program Context

This is a comprehensive, collaborative model that addresses the needs of all students with disabilities. These include a need for vocational assessment, behavior management, modified general education curriculum, community networks, and medical services. These needs are addressed cooperatively by teachers, parents, and community service providers in several ways, including yearly Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), transition activities, and vocational assessment.

Description

All students from the elementary to high school grade levels are exposed to a career education curriculum which involves career awareness, exploration, preparation, and specialization.

During the elementary grades (pre-kindergarten to sixth grade), students are exposed to activities related to career awareness, such as developing self awareness and learning occupational vocabulary.

In grades seven to nine (junior high school), students focus on career exploration. For example, during eighth grade, students assess their interests and develop a career plan with the assistance of their guidance counselors. In addition, students use the Student Transition Planner to document their transition activities. During the ninth grade, students continue to explore possible careers as they enroll in a variety of career/vocational courses and continue to document data in their transition planners.

During grades ten to twelve, students begin their career preparation. Prior to entering the tenth grade, students travel to local high schools with their special education teachers to choose the courses that meet their interests and educational needs. Students choose from the following course options: vocational courses, employability curriculum, and career/vocational education training experiences. Vocational courses include business, family and consumer education, marketing, and technology. The employability curriculum includes

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Community Setting

Kenosha is a large city with a population of 84,000. Kenosha has two major high schools, an alternative high school, and three institutions of post-secondary education.

Population Served

The model serves a total of 2,436 students with disabilities from the elementary to high school grade levels. The majority of the students have specific learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, or mental retardation. Other areas of primary diagnosis include hearing, visual or speech impairment, traumatic brain injury, autism, or orthopedic disabilities.

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Program Staff

Transition/Work Experience Instructor

3 full-time

- Supervises students on the job
- Provides students and parents with information about community agency applications and procedures
- Secures new job sites
- Collaborates with School-to-Work Coordinators
- Provides in-service training and collaboration with community agencies

Transition Consultant

1 part-time

- Manages project activities
- Edits bimonthly newsletter
- Acts as community liaison

classes in leadership, pre-employability skills, and cooperative work experience. Career/vocational education training experiences include job shadowing, work experience, pre-apprenticeship, and apprenticeship programs. Students continue to document their activities in their Student Transition Planners. During the final two years of high school, students start to finalize their career plans and develop a portfolio.

Multidisciplinary teams, including the student, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and community liaisons document transition needs yearly for in-school, post-school, and future education/employment training. Interagency coordination of services are started as a result of collaborative relationships facilitated by the Transition Steering Committee. The interagency collaboration is monitored to ensure that upon a student's exit, all links to the community will be made. Connecting students to the community as well as follow-up is conducted by surveying students, documenting the services that are provided by community agencies, and attendance at IEP/transition meetings by community liaisons.

Exemplary School-to-Work Components

Collaboration - Connecting Activity

Collaboration between the school and the community provides students with opportunities for leadership training and familiarization with their community. This collaboration is achieved by inviting community agency liaisons to attend parent/educator conferences and organizing field trips to local colleges, technical training programs, and businesses.

What Makes it Work?

The Student Driven Collaborative Transitioning model is successful because of the following elements:

- Clearly defined mission.
- Quality leadership and staff.
- Foundation on published research, including Dr. Richard Lombard's collaborative transition model and Dr. Andy Halpern's research on transition.
- Focus on the individual needs of students.
- Student/parent/community involvement.
- Academic and vocational education, vocational assessment, supported employment, on-the-job training and career training opportunities.
- Collaborative relationships between school, work, local colleges, community service agencies, and local business employers through a dedicated and diverse steering committee.

Sam's Story

Sam is a student with multiple disabilities who by the age of 16 had failed to develop a great vision for his future. Circumstances surrounding his life, including an extremely unstable home environment and inaccessibility issues, were barriers he encountered.

With the support of his special education teacher at Kenosha, Sam began to address his need for accessible housing and independent living skills training, as well as establishing personal and professional goals. This process helped Sam to build confidence and motivation to seek out and build collaborative relationships with those in the community who could assist him in becoming an independent and successful adult. He began networking with Society's Assets, a local organization that assists persons with disabilities in achieving independence by providing natural supports and other activities in the community. As a result, Society's Assets and other agencies provided Sam with adaptive home equipment and a wheelchair which greatly enhanced his independence. Sam now lives independently in an accessible adult family home with other men who have similar interests and accommodation requirements.

Through his improved self-esteem and increased independence, Sam is advocating for his needs, passing his classes, working toward getting his driver's license, working a part-time job, and establishing new friendships with his peers. He has completed his high school diploma by taking general education classes at Gateway Technical College. He plans to start college in the near future.

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For Further Information

School-to-Work Outreach Project
Institute on Community Integration (UAP)
University of Minnesota
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Minneapolis, MN 55455
(612)626-8155; fax (612)624-9344
http://www.ici.coled.umn.edu/schooltowork/

School-to-work is described in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994.

School to work is . . .

A System built to provide opportunities for students to learn about and experience work while in school.

Educational Reform that addresses the need for students to gain work experience and workplace skills while in school.

Partnerships between schools, employers and communities.

For All Students, kindergarten through 12th grade.

School-to-Work Outreach Project Overview

The School-to-Work Outreach Project at the Institute on Community Integration (UAP) is a nationwide, three year project funded by the U.S. Department of Education. This project assists and supports school-to-work initiatives through the identification of exemplary school-to-work models/practices/strategies that include students with disabilities. Exemplary school-to-work models/practices/strategies are identified through a five step selection process:

- **Nomination**
- **Application**
- **Reference**
- **Application Review**
- **Final Review and Selection**

Identification Criteria and school-to-work Priority Areas established by the School-to-Work Outreach Project guide the application review.

Profiles of the identified models/practices/strategies are available upon request. Adoption and replication of these exemplary school-to-work activities is encouraged and technical assistance is available to schools and organizations interested in implementing these models/practices/strategies or improving existing school-to-work activities and systems. Contact the School-to-Work Outreach Project at the above address for further information.

Basic Elements of School-to-Work

School-based Learning - Instruction and experiences based on academic and occupational standards.

Work-based Learning - Workplace experience, structured training, mentoring and apprenticeships at job sites.

Connecting Activities - A variety of activities that build and maintain bridges between school, work and other adult environments.

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